

Central Intelligence Agency



Washington, D.C. 20505

DIRECTORATE OF INTELLIGENCE

MEMORANDUM FOR: J.M. Poindexter
Deputy Assistant to the President for
National Security Affairs

SUBJECT: Terrorist Threat in the Middle East [redacted]

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1. Attached is our current assessment of the terrorist threat to the United States and US interests in the Middle East. As the text indicates, we view Iranian-sponsored attacks, particularly in Lebanon, as the most immediate source of danger-- and one that is likely to persist into next year. [redacted]

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2. This memorandum was prepared jointly by [redacted] the Terrorism/Narcotics Analysis Division, Office of Global Issues, and by [redacted] Arab-Israeli Division, Office of Near East and South Asian Analysis. [redacted]

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3. Your comments and queries on this assessment are welcome, and may be addressed to the Deputy Chief, Terrorism/Narcotics Analysis Division, Office of Global Issues, [redacted]

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Robert M. Gates
Deputy Director for Intelligence

Attachment:

The Terrorist Threat to US Interests in the Middle East
GI M , November 1984 [redacted]

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MEMORANDUM

**The Terrorist Threat to US Interests in the Middle East
Current Assessment**

Near Term Threat

Terrorism continues to pose a serious near term threat to US interests in the Middle East. A number of experienced terrorist groups in the region have demonstrated both the will and capability to attack US persons and facilities--as well as those of our allies--either at their own discretion or at the behest of patron states. Iranian-backed groups present the gravest and most immediate danger to American lives and property, at least through the period ending 31 January 1985. Libyan-sponsored terrorism is likely to be directed against Egypt, while Palestinian groups will focus their operations against Israel and Jordan.

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Our analysis

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suggests that several specific threats are active against US persons and facilities:

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- o Radical Lebanese Shias backed by Iran want to attack US targets in Lebanon.

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officials may be targets for kidnaping or assassination.

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terrorism by Iranian-backed Shias could occur with little or no warning in Kuwait, Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, or Iraq. Terrorists could attempt attacks against US diplomats in Iraq or elsewhere in the Gulf in reaction to the anticipated renewal of diplomatic relations between Baghdad and Washington.

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- o Iranian-backed attacks against US diplomatic or military facilities in Europe are also possible in the short term. Iranian operatives have been active in Europe in 1984

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[redacted] we believe
Jordanian, Israeli and Egyptian interests also face active
terrorist threats.

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- o Radical Palestinian groups, acting on their own or at Syria's behest, are likely to attempt attacks inside Jordan or against Jordanian diplomats abroad to demonstrate their vehement opposition to the Palestine National Council meeting in Amman.
- o Radical as well as mainline Palestinian groups such as Arafat's Fatah are likely to attempt spectacular terrorist actions inside Israel and the occupied territories in their competition for leadership of the Palestinian movement. Radical groups such as the Fatah rebels led by Abu Musa may attack Israeli targets elsewhere.

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- o Qadhafi almost certainly will seek revenge for his loss of face over the bungled attempt to assassinate an exiled opponent in Egypt.

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[redacted] We believe, however, that Libya is most likely to focus its efforts against Egyptian targets. Qadhafi fears an American response were a Libyan hand to be detected in operations against US targets.

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Syrian Policy Toward the Radical Lebanese Shias

Ambassador Murphy's visit to Damascus did not alter Syrian President Assad's attitude toward Hizballah and Iranian activities in Lebanon. Damascus remains at odds with the Iranian-sponsored groups because it is determined to stabilize the security situation in and around Beirut and no longer welcomes disruptive activities by Shia extremists. Despite several clashes between Syrian troops and radical Shia gunmen, however, Damascus is still unwilling to move forcefully against the Hizballah and the Iranian Revolutionary Guard (IRG) in Lebanon. Syria probably believes it can manipulate the terrorist network to serve its own interests, and realizes a total crackdown might damage its relationship with Iran and threaten the special economic benefits Damascus receives from Tehran. Assad probably also realizes a Syrian move could prompt the terrorists to attack Syrian interests. [REDACTED]

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In our judgment, Syria is capable of seriously curtailing Hizballah activities in the Bekaa Valley. The Syrian Army maintains several divisions and special forces regiments in or near the Bekaa, and has the ability to close down terrorist training camps, restrict the freedom of movement now exercised by the Iranians and the radical Shias, and effectively prevent them from using the Bekaa as a staging ground for terrorism. Syria cannot, however, control Shia terrorism in Beirut and its immediate environs. [REDACTED]

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Status of Terrorist Camps in the Bekaa Valley

We believe the Shaykh Abdallah barracks remains occupied by Lebanese Shia extremists and Iranian Revolutionary Guards. Changes in the location and types of vehicles within the compound have been noted [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] within the past two months, indicating frequent traffic in and out of the barracks. [REDACTED]

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[redacted] a generally low level of activity within the barracks. The occupants apparently have become more cautious--possibly because they fear a daytime retaliatory airstrike--and probably are conducting their training elsewhere in the Ba'labakk area during daylight hours. [redacted] they probably return to the barracks each night.

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[redacted] the Hizballah and the Iranian Revolutionary Guards have been on alert since the bombing of the US Embassy annex. [redacted] a five-meter-deep air-raid shelter has been dug beneath the barracks. [redacted]

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[redacted] there has been an increase in antiaircraft weapons in and around the compound. [redacted]

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The Shaykh Abdallah barracks remains the principal target in Lebanon. Other locations [redacted] as centers of terrorist activity include the Khayyam Hotel, a possible IRG headquarters in Ba'labakk, and training

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[REDACTED]

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camps near Janta (Nabi Shit), Nabi Sabat, and Nassiriyah.

[REDACTED]

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[REDACTED]

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**We have been
unable to confirm that the Hizballah or IRG currently use these
facilities.**

[REDACTED]

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[REDACTED]

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[REDACTED]

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